
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The National Park Service is the premier steward and protector of our nation's diverse natural and cultural heritage. The primary mission of the National Park Service is to preserve the nation's natural and cultural resources and values for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. **Good Character, Good Stewards** continues this legacy by striving to create knowledgeable, responsible citizens.

Congress set aside Yellowstone National Park in 1872 as the first national "public park or pleasuring-ground." However, it wasn't until 1916 that a federal bureau, the National Park Service, was created to manage the growing number of national parks then assigned to the U.S. Department of the Interior.

On August 25, 1916, President Woodrow Wilson signed the act creating the National Park Service. This act states that

the Service thus established shall promote and regulate the use of Federal areas known as national parks, monuments and reservations ... which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.

Today, the National Park Service manages more than 390 park areas, including more than 18 in Virginia. These parks hold a special place in the hearts of all Americans, to whom the parks belong. Each park tells a story and represents a special characteristic important to our country through its history, location, or amazing natural features. These stories are just waiting to be discovered and valued by students who will realize that national parks are part of their history, their future, their pleasure, and their responsibility.

Good Character, Good Stewards will help guide your students to model responsible behaviors and make informed decisions. As lifelong stewards, they can positively impact their world by caring for plants, wildlife, people, and the environment. As responsible citizens, students can ensure that the treasures of our National Park System will be here for generations to come. Our children are the future!



Education Mission

Interpretation and education is a primary organizational purpose of the National Park Service, essential to achieving our mission of protecting and preserving our nation's natural and cultural resources. We envision a national park system that is recognized as a significant resource for learning, where people and organizations collaborate on teaching and learning about the interconnection of human culture and nature, natural systems, and the values of America's diverse heritage, and the principles of democracy. Parks are an integral part of the nation's educational system, providing unique and powerful individual learning experiences that help shape understanding and inspire personal values.

For more information on national parks, visit the National Park Service website at www.nps.gov

For an on-line guide to educational programs at National Park Service sites in Virginia, visit the *Exploring the Real Thing* website at <http://www.nps.gov/ERT/>